

TIMES

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TRIBUNE

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AS WE SEE IT

They Speak Too Soon

The recent blast of the Public Health Service on "Smoking and Lung Cancer" gives us official assurance that if we don't smoke and get lung cancer anyway - it won't be from smoking.

This is about as far as anyone can go in the light of present knowledge, yet, in the effort to make tobacco appear the culprit, this Government report drags out tired old statistics that were presented to the public years ago, yet admits that experimental evidence does not support the theory of smoking as a cause of lung cancer.

The Public Health review also admits that we still don't know the effects of air pollution and occupational exposures and that the tobacco theory does not explain differences in lung cancer incidence rates.

Dr. C.C. Little, scientific director of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee, has spent 50 years in cancer research, notes that the report gives little or no attention to new evidence of recent months that:

"1. Finds that people described as the world's heaviest cigarette smokers have low lung cancer death rates compared with people who smoke less but have been long exposed to urban air pollution.

"2. Shows that direct inhalation of tobacco smoke by laboratory animals over long periods of time has not resulted

in causing lung cancer in these animals.

"3. Reveals that human lung tissues undergo changes, considered suspicious by some, that are found among both young and old non-smokers and smokers, while lung tissues 'may be perfectly normal in heavy smokers'.

"4. Confirms the long-established but little-publicized fact that lung cancer occurs more frequently in people who have a medical history of previous serious lung ailments, such as tuberculosis, pneumonia and influenza, indicating a relationship of possible significance."

It will be recalled that the commotion over lung cancer and smoking arose with the discovery that laboratory animals developed skin cancer after being painted with tobacco "tars". Certainly, the failure of smoke inhalation tests is more significant in view of the fact that people smoke tobacco rather than using it as a cosmetic.

All in all, the Public Health review may be criticized for undue reliance on the published opinions of those who have been long committed to the theory that smoking is the principal cause of lung cancer.

On balance, most thoughtful people, we believe, will go along with Dr. Little's summation that "we are only at the threshold of understanding the breadth and depth of the lung cancer problem".

WARDS OF GOVERNMENT

Certainly the government cannot ban cigarette smoking. We read that it is not likely to happen, since for the present the government has no authority to move against cigarettes for any effect they may have on health. This is what Ovid A. Martin, Associated Press writer has to say.

The statement is the result of the last government release on the association of cigarette smoking and lung cancer. To begin with there has never been established any definite proof of the cause of cancer, lung cancer or any type. When this is established the American people will be given the information.

The government takes many contrary positions. The income of the cranberry raisers was wiped out with one swoop when the government issued the recall of all cranberries from the grocery shelf. This was the most drastic exercise of authority we have witnessed to date. The poisonous weed killer has been definitely established. And it has been estimated that if you eat a ton of cranberries sprayed with the weed killer, cancer could develop as it has in rats.

So out go the cranberries, then back they come, supposedly with all the poison sprayed berries eliminated. Well, think what a job the government has if it tries to take from us all the harmful things of life.

There are so many that are harmful when taken in excess that few will be left. In fact you could expect the government to eliminate all fats in the diet, saying fats cause cholesterol. Then out could go sweets, because candy is said to be one of the major reasons for decay in children's teeth.

You see how absurd it all is, this matter of control. If the government is to control the area is unlimited. But is it the concern of government? Government should inform, it should advise and then adult people are supposed to have the intelligence to act for their best interest.

If the government is to do our thinking for us, we have come to a dreary time in our lives. There is a Department of Health, Education and Welfare. It has a place and an important one. But the administrators should never lose sight of the fact that Americans are mature people. They do not like being regulated.

When tobacco is proven to cause lung cancer, this should be told the people. All definite conclusions should be given. But speculation should not enter into the picture. It is too serious. For anything taken to excess is harmful.

We still put our confidence in the good common sense of the American people, after they know the facts. Moderate is the answer, not regulation.

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